

Orlando Sentinel

OrlandoSentinel.com

FINAL EDITION SUNDAY OCTOBER 17, 2004

\$1.50

FOUNDED 1876

Local & State

Orlando Sentinel
OrlandoSentinel.com
SUNDAY, OCTOBER 17, 2004
SECTION B

FINAL

TAKING NAMES

PRE-EMPTIVE STRIKE

Jeb Bush's office had an early start on a post-debate press release.

Page B2

IN ORANGE COUNTY

INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL

Performances and crafts were part of a cultural event at UCF on Saturday.

Page B3

CAMPAIGN 2004

STATE HOUSE RACE

The challenger says her main focus is keeping residents safe.

Page B5

INDEX

Central Florida	B3
Deaths	B6
Florida	B5
Weather	B8

Taiwanese, African and Native American peoples share their customs Saturday at UCF to preserve their heritage.



SHOUN A. HILL/ORLANDO SENTINEL

Chu Fong-Ying stands near Taiwanese art during the first Indigenous Heritage Festival on Saturday at the University of Central Florida. African and Native American art and performances also were featured.

Festival shines light on vanishing world cultures

By ERIN AILWORTH
SENTINEL STAFF WRITER

Tony Coolidge's promise to reunite his dying mother with her lost Taiwanese family culminated Saturday — almost a decade after her death — in an international celebration at the University of Central Florida.

Coolidge, 37, said his mother's last wish was to find her family, but lung cancer kept her from traveling. She died in 1995.

One year later, Coolidge flew to Taiwan. There, he said, he discovered he was a member of the Atayal — one of the island's 12 indigenous groups. And this vibrant culture — known for colorful weavings, facial tattoos and native songs and dances — was disappearing.

Experts predict that more than half of the 20,000 remaining indigenous languages will vanish within 10 years.

Coolidge wanted to stem the tide.

So on Saturday at the UCF student union, the first Indigenous Heritage Festival brought together performers and crafts people from aboriginal Taiwanese, African and local Native American tribes.

The event began with a Taiwanese focus, Coolidge said, but expanded after a May trip to the United Nations showed him that all indigenous groups around the world are suffering.

Several hundred people attended the Saturday event, which also included a film festival and an award ceremony for those who have furthered indigenous causes.

"It's just good for us to broaden our horizons . . . and see more of the world without having to leave Orlando," said Brigitte Kovacevich, 31, who was attending the festival with her grandmother.

The two watched as a group of Yami performers, also from Taiwan, demonstrated the "hair dance." Women traditionally used this simple dance, where they bow and fling their hair forward, to call their husbands home from fishing.

"They believe that the movement of their hair will integrate with the movement of the ocean," Alice Takiwatan, leader of the

Taipei Multiculture & Arts Group, said through an interpreter. Takiwatan manages the Taiwanese performers and said she hopes their appearance here will help Americans reconnect with their pasts.

Next on stage was Langui Malaslasan, 30, who demonstrated how to use a mouth harp. The microphone barely picked up the instrument's twanging sounds.

"This one model is best for singing love songs in your friends ear," Malaslasan joked to the audience, with the help of an interpreter.

She said she performs to feel closer to the older generations of her family.

"At first, I did not like this because it's not [dancing to] pop songs," Malaslasan said. "But it joins my family and now I like it because it's important to us."

Earlier, a troupe from Africa drummed for the audience. Upstairs, festival-goers meandered around a demonstration by Kenyan woodcarvers. On the other side of the room, Threehawk Atcity and his wife, Pam, showed off willow and tin "burden baskets" made by members of the Mescaleero Apache tribe in New Mexico.

Coolidge said it's exactly this type of cultural knowledge he wants to pass on.

Already the president of a Winter Springs-based Web, multimedia and production company, Coolidge founded ATAYAL, a nonprofit that works to heighten awareness of the indigenous cultures of Taiwan. Coolidge said his organization put together and funded the festival in conjunction with UCF's Diversity Week.

The college campus was the perfect venue, Coolidge said, because it is "one of the top universities promoting cultural awareness." He said he hopes to bring similar festivals to other campuses in the coming year.

"I was determined everyone back in America was going to learn about it [Atayal heritage] because I was so proud of it," he said.

Erin Ailworth can be reached at 407-931-5916 or eailworth@orlandosentinel.com.